Refusal by Embassies to Accept 500 Rupee Notes

2978. SHRI SHIBU SOREN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether several Embassies and High Commission in Delhi have refused to accept the 500 rupee notes as visa fees;

(b) if so, the details there of and the reasons therefor; and

(c) what action has been/is being taken in this connection ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) No, Sir

(b) Does not arise

(c) As a precaution, the Ministry of External Affairs have issued a circular to all Diplomatic Missions advising them to accept 500 rupee notes for Consular/ Visa service being rendered by them. They have also been advised to get in touch with Shri Y.S.P. Thorat, Regional Director of the RBI in New Delhi for any doubt the genuineness of any Indian currency note or any other matter connected therewith.

Indo-US Co-operation in the Field of Energy and Environment

2979. SHRI ANANTA SETHI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have taken steps to establish co-operation with United States in the field of energy and environment;

(b) if **so,** the details thereof;

(c) what are the other areas where the Indo-US co-operation has been established;

(d) the agreement signed for the purpose; and

(e) the steps taken to strengthen Indo-US relation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) During the visit of the President Clinton to India, the two sides signed a Joint Statement on Co-operation in Energy and Environment on 22nd March in Agra.